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JAPAN

The Call from Japan

By Rev. W. E. Towson

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NOTWITHSTANDING the movement in Japan for an independent and self-governing Church, there remains a call for missionary effort in that remarkable country. I base this call on five conditions:

What Has Been Accomplished.

There has been less than one generation of active missionary work in Japan. The results show about 60,000 Protestant, 60,000 Roman and 30,000 Greek Catholic Christians. The leading pastor has recently said: "There are more than one million who are ordering their lives by the teachings of the Bible, who only require to be brought to a public confession of faith." There is a "Christian Party" whose influence has been estimated at one hundred times the number of the Christians. Their influence has been markedly manifested in politics and in moral effort. The Christian members of Parliament have never exceeded thirteen out of three hundred and sixty; still there have been elected two Christians as presidents of the body, one of these reëlected five times. The Emperor has made monetary gifts to the Young Men's Christian Association, to a Protestant orphan asylum, and to a home for released prisoners. These have varied from 1,000 to 10,000 yen (about $500 to $5,000).

It is known that the Prince Imperial occasionally quietly goes to a church and listens

to a Christian sermon. His eldest son has a governess who is a Christian, a member of the Methodist Church. Bishop Candler, who spent several months in Japan recently, said he would not be surprised if the present prince, when he reaches the throne, would have a court preacher. Few, if any, of the mission fields can show results as great as these accomplished in as brief a period.

What is Being Accomplished.

A recent writer has said that "the most marked feature in Christian work in Japan to-day is the movement of the nation as a whole toward Christianity." A leading pastor says: "The time has come when people have to be restrained, so eager are they to receive baptism." In meetings of but two or three days' duration it is a common occurrence for from fifty to one hundred and twenty names to be handed in of those who wish to study Christianity or to become Christians. A few months since, at one brief meeting, over seven hundred names were received. During his recent visit, General Booth held nine evening services, in which nine hundred and sixty-nine persons went forward to the "mourners' bench." A letter from a friend tells me of over two hundred who have come into the Church within a few months on one island.

Our Work and the United Church.

In 1886 Dr. J. W. Lambuth and son, Dr. W. R. Lambuth, and O. A. Dukes were transferred from China to open work for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. They selected a ter-

ritory unoccupied by any other Methodism. This territory is a fertile and populous region, comprising the southern part of the mainland, the Island of Shikoku, and northeastern part of Kiushiu. It contains the four large cities of Kobe, Osaka, Kioto, and Hiroshima, aggregating over 1,500,000 population. The smaller cities, towns and villages are almost countless. Our educational work has been wise and successful; the Kwansei Gakuin, of Kobe; our Anglo-Japanese College at Kobe, with 258 students; the Hiroshima, Girls' School, covering nearly a whole block, in a new building, with 945 students; the Lambuth Memorial Training School for Bible women, in Kobe, with 64 students; and the Palmore Institute, in Kobe, with 140 students. These are crowded, and are greatly in need of enlargement and fuller equipment.

The evangelistic work is carried on in fifteen circuits and stations, with twenty-four organized churches and thirty-eight chapels and houses of worship. Two hundred and sixty three were added to the Church on profession of faith last year.

Our mission leads them all in the proportion of Sunday-school scholars to Church members. There are 5,451 of the former to 1,774 of the latter—more than three to one. Let it be remembered, however, that no record of facts can keep pace with the rapid changes. What is correct to-day will be different to-morrow.

One of the most significant missionary facts of recent years was the union of three Methodisms into one, and the setting up of a native Church among a people so recently strangers

to the gospel. This was accomplished when, on May 19, 1907, the Methodist Episcopal, the Canadian Methodist, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, united to form the Nippon Methodist Kyokwai, and the body formed a Discipline and elected a bishop of its own. The first Annual Conference under the new arrangement met March 31, 1908.

This by no means discharges the Boards from responsibility to continue their aid. This will be necessary for years to come. Our Board will therefore still continue to contribute and our missionary will still labor in coöperation with the Japanese Methodist Church.

The Boards that have work in Japan should still give them a large measure of financial cooperation, yet I believe that if Japanese Christianity were left to itself it is vitally sufficient to carry on the work to a crowning success. A recent writer has said that if American Christianity by some cataclysm should be totally destroyed, Japanese Christianity would send missionaries to this country to restore the lost faith. In some respects, Japan is in a better position to receive Christianity than America. Christianity means suffering, and the United States is not suffering to-day. Japan has recently had her baptism of suffering, while the United States is reveling in wealth and luxury. God has been preparing this country to bear the suffering of other nations. May He put Japan, China, and Korea upon the heart of American Christianity! Unless the United States enters into suffering with the spiritually needy nations, there is real danger that she will lose her Christianity.

The Present Need.

Over three-fourths of Japan is unevangelized. This is three times as many people as are in all Korea, and yet there is not a home in all Japan that is not illumined by coal oil brought from Christian lands. In little towns of a few hundred inhabitants can be seen the advertisement of Duke's "Cameo" cigarettes, manufactured by a Christian merchant of our Southland; and yet in these same towns there are no churches, chapels, or Bibles. What do these things mean but that Christian business men are more alive to the opportunity to secure wealth than the Church is to win souls? I bring you no picture of the degradation, the superstition, and the idolatry of Japan; I simply base the plea for Japan on the fact that three-fourths of its inhabitants are without Christ. There is no other basis for Christian propagandism than this: "Without God and without hope in the world."

The Need as Recognized by the Nation's Leaders.

Twenty-five years ago Marquis Ito said: "I regard religion as quite unnecessary for a nation's life." To-day he says: "We get our civilization from the West, and we must get our religion from the same source." Count Okuma has recently said: "The notion I entertained of the efficiency of a material civilization I now admit to have been a mistaken one."

The reasons for this revolution in thought are: (1) The attempt to establish a high moral standard in Japan without religion has failed. The new wine of Western civilization is burst-

ing the old bottles of mediæval Japan. The moral and social standard which did for feudalism and a closed nation is not standing the strain and stress of the world's best civilization. Japan is learning the lesson that material civilization alone is not sufficient for the life of a nation. Vice was never more rampant. "The bottom has dropped out of Japanese morality." (2) They recognize that Christianity is the basis of Western civilization, and that the structure they have reared will soon fall unless they strengthen the foundation. Hence the change in the opinions of Marquis Ito and other leaders. (3) Christianity has produced a new type of men and women, truly different from any Japan has known heretofore; produced men who, while occupying positions of place and power, are uninfluenced by graft or any other species of wrongdoing.

Japan's Present World Position.

Japan stands on an equality with the civilized nations of the world. She is in military alliance with England. Japan is the leader of the East, the pilot of the Oriental ship of state. In her hands is the destiny of the Orient. As goes Japan, so will go Korea, China and Siam. I believe God has called her to this position. We must not eliminate God from the movements of history. "Christ is the head over all things to the Church." It surely was providential that Korea fell into the hands of Japan, rather than into the hands of Russia. If it had been the latter, it would have meant the death of all Protestant mis-

sionary effort in that country. Japan has been criticised in reference to her management of Korea. So has the United States in regard to her conduct in the Philippines. If left to herself, the coming years will show that Japan will do for Korea what England has done for Egypt.

Japan is the schoolmaster of the Orient. There are over eighteen thousand Korean, Siamese, and Chinese students in her capital. There has never been such a movement of students to one country in the history of the world. Special missionaries have been appointed for work among these students. Japan is not only the schoolmaster of these eighteen thousand students, but she is the schoolmaster of the entire East; and from her China, Siam and India will learn the lessons of independence, self-government, and civilization. The importance of the situation in Japan has not been equaled in the whole history of missions. Were she not the tremendously energetic and progressive country that she is, the winning of her millions to Christ would present a call worthy of the activities of the Church. But when we think of Japan's position and influence, of what she has accomplished, and of what she promises in the world's field, we have a situation and a call as colossal as momentous facts can make them possible. Every prayer for Japan is a prayer of the whole East. Contributions for Japan are contributions for the entire East. And every servant of the Church sent to Japan is sent to the entire Orient.